

THE MENDIP HILLS
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

A WILD LAND READY FOR ADVENTURE



VISITOR GUIDE



OS EXPLORER MAP
141

GRID REFERENCE
ST 476587

POSTCODE
BS40 7AU CAR PARK AT THE BOTTOM OF
BURRINGTON COMBE

BLACK DOWN & BURRINGTON HAM



This area is a very special part of Mendip. Open heathland covers Black Down, with Beacon Batch at its highest point. Most of Black Down is a Scheduled Monument because of the archaeology from the late Stone Age to the Second World War.

Burrington Combe and Ham are to the north and designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest for the wildlife habitats. Today goats are on the steep slopes, with ponies and cattle roaming across the grasslands controlling the scrub.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
discoveringblackdown.org.uk

OS EXPLORER MAP
141

GRID REFERENCE
ST466539

POSTCODE
BS27 3QF CAR PARK AT THE BOTTOM
OF THE GORGE

CHEDDAR GORGE



Courtesy of Cheddar Gorge & Caves

The internationally famous gorge boasts the highest inland limestone cliffs in the country. Incredible cave systems take you back through human history and are all part of the visitor experience.

Travel on up the gorge and you'll be faced with adventure at every angle. Look up and you'll see wild sheep, goats and climbers perching on the cliffs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
cheddargorge.co.uk

OS EXPLORER MAP
154

GRID REFERENCE
ST578609

POSTCODE
BS40 8TF PICNIC AND VISITOR FACILITIES,
NORTH EAST SIDE OF LAKE

CHEW VALLEY LAKE



Slow down and relax around this reservoir that sits in the sheltered Chew Valley. Internationally important for the birds that use the lake and locally loved by the fishing community.

Over 4000 ducks of 12 different varieties stay on the lake from late July to February and many other rare species come and go. The fishing is also of an international standard, check the website below for open dates and how to get permits.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
bristolwaterfisheries.co.uk/chew-valley-lake

OS EXPLORER MAP
153

GRID REFERENCE
ST386557

POSTCODE
BS25 1DH KINGS WOOD CAR PARK

CROOK PEAK



The distinctive peak that most of us see from the M5 as we drive by. This is iconic Mendip limestone countryside, with gorgeous grasslands in the summer and rugged outcrops of stone to play on when you get to the top.

Crook Peak has been important as a landmark and boundary from very early times, and the origins of the name are unclear although it is believed that 'Crook' comes from the Old English 'Cruc' meaning 'peak', making it Peak Peak.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
nationaltrust.org.uk/mendip-hills

A WILD LAND READY FOR ADVENTURE



TAKE A STEP ONTO THE MENDIP HILLS

Remember, the area gets more rain than normal and the higher you go the colder and windier it will be. Dress accordingly and pack the right kit for your adventure.

Take your knowledge to a deeper level and find out more about the area at mendiphillsaonb.org.uk

NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL, NATIONALLY PROTECTED

The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation recognizes just how special the area is and that the experience you have here needs conserving and enhancing.

THE AONB UNIT AND THE AONB PARTNERSHIP

Due to the special nature of the Mendip Hills AONB a Partnership of local, regional and national organisations looks after the landscape. The AONB Unit works to make people aware of the AONB and coordinate effort to make it better for everyone.

For further information about this:

MendipHillsAONB.org.uk

MendipHills@somerset.gov.uk

01761 462338

@MendipHillsAONB

Facebook: Mendip Hills AONB

Youtube: Mendip Hills AONB



The Mendip Hills Fund

Help the fund that helps the hills! The Mendip Hills Fund gives grants to local projects that look after the place and the community.

You can help the fund by leaving a donation for the wildlife badges available in pubs and shops in the area. Or local tourism businesses ask their guests to add a little to the bill which goes to the fund.

You could also just text **AONB72 £3** (or any amount up to £10) to **70070**

To find out more somersetcf.org.uk/special-projects/mendip-hills-fund

OS EXPLORER MAP
141

GRID REFERENCE
ST526509

POSTCODE
BA5 3BB CAR PARK BY VILLAGE GREEN

PRIDDY



The limestone of Mendip gives Priddy its special character. The muted colours and sense of space created by the cottages and buildings around the Green, with its unique hurdle stack, are the essence of the Mendip plateau. This historic village and surrounding landscape reveal evidence of humans dating back to the last ice-age 10,000 years ago.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
priddyparish.org

OS EXPLORER MAP
141

GRID REFERENCE
ST421560

POSTCODE
BS25 1DH

KINGS WOOD

Explore this ancient oak woodland that is the gateway to different routes. Hike up to Wavering Down and then onto Crook Peak, or drop down onto the Strawberry Line and walk or ride through the long tunnel where the trains used to take strawberries from Mendip to markets and hotels in London. The 48m Mendip Way cuts through here if you're up for the challenge?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
nationaltrust.org.uk/mendip-hills

OS EXPLORER MAP
141

GRID REFERENCE
ST548513

POSTCODE
BA5 3AS

PRIDDY MINERIES & STOCKHILL FOREST

Nature has reclaimed this lead mining site to form a flowing landscape of tall grasses hiding ponds. The lead mining finished in 1908 but the habitats that have formed here are amazing for watching wildlife. Walks up to North Hill, Mendip's second highest hill and Priddy Nine Barrows can all start here. Sitting next to the Mineries is Stockhill Forest, a large modern plantation that has lots of paths and 'easy-going' trails.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
forestry.gov.uk/StockHillForest

OS EXPLORER MAP
141

GRID REFERENCE
ST518492

POSTCODE
BA5 1EL CAR PARK ON PELTING
DROVE, SOUTH OF PRIDDY

DEER LEAP



Jaw-dropping views out (on a clear day) across the Somerset Levels, with Glastonbury Tor and Nyland Hill in front of you, along with many of the small 'islands' that sit within the marshes of the Somerset Levels.

Walk into the middle of the field to find the abandoned medieval farmstead nestled on the fertile slopes, a barn and collapsed ash tree mark this spot. From this field you can travel along the distinctive southern slopes of the Mendip Hills and link to places like Ebbor Gorge and Wookey Hole.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
swheritage.org.uk/deer-leap

OS EXPLORER MAP
141

GRID REFERENCE
ST558541

POSTCODE
BS40 6DA

EAST HARPTREE WOODS

An evergreen forest with a surprise at its heart. Follow the 'easy-going' trails and you'll discover the last remaining lead smelting chimney on Mendip with superb views across the Chew Valley.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
forestry.gov.uk/EastHartreeWoods



OTHER SITES FOR YOU TO DISCOVER:

BLEADON HILL
SHUTE SHELVE HILL
VELVET BOTTOM
BLACKMOOR RESERVE
WOOKEY HOLE CAVES
CHEDDAR GORGE & CAVES
BLAGDON LAKE
ROWBERROW FOREST
DOLEBURY WARREN

Postcodes in the countryside cover large areas. Please also use a map.

YOUR GUIDE TO A GOOD DAY OUT

We want you to have a great adventure and leave with happy memories. By following the Countryside Code you can help look after yourself and this special area:

THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE – RESPECT, PROTECT, ENJOY

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow the many signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- For the protection of plants and animals (and the views) take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control and always clean up after your dog
- Consider other people

Please also park in designated car parks not in field gateways or on the verges. Don't leave valuables on display in your car.

If you experience access difficulties on Public Rights of Way, visit the Frequently Asked Questions page on our website for the contact details of local authority Rights of Way teams.

PLANNING YOUR EXPERIENCE ON THE MENDIP HILLS



For downloadable walk routes, guides, leaflets, links to tourist information centres and more go to mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/Visiting-the-Mendip-Hills

The Mendip Hills AONB is on OS Explorer maps 141, 153 and 155

A LANDSCAPE READY FOR LIFE

The Mendip Hills is a surprising and distinctive landscape south of Bristol and rising above the Somerset Levels. It's full of adventure and atmosphere for you to experience.

There are 12 'special qualities' you need to experience on the Mendip Hills. These experiences are what makes the Mendip Hills special.

1 THE EVIDENCE OF HUMANS dating back 500,000 years. Henge monuments, barrows and hillforts through to World War 2 sites are prominent features on the plateau. Romans and Victorians left a mining landscape that nature is reclaiming.

STOCKHILL FOREST AND EAST HARPTREE WOODS ARE PLACES WHERE YOU CAN STILL SEE THE OLD MINING LANDSCAPE.

2 A TOUGH LANDSCAPE FAMOUS FOR ADVENTURE AND GETTING IN TOUCH WITH NATURE. The geology has created incredible opportunities for caving, climbing and cycling. But the tranquillity allows quieter activities like bird watching and simply walking.

BURRINGTON COMBE IS A GREAT PLACE TO START YOUR ADVENTURE.

3 DISTINCTIVE LIMESTONE RIDGE with windswept plateau, punctuated by spectacular dry valleys and gorges, ancient sinkholes and depressions, and impressive rocky outcrops.

CHEDDAR GORGE PROBABLY THE SINGLE BEST KNOWN LIMESTONE KARST FEATURE IN BRITAIN.

4 A SPARSELY POPULATED PLATEAU with settlements of Mendip stone along the spring line where the water emerges from underground. Dark skies give you an incredible view of the stars at night.

PRIDDY IS THE ONLY VILLAGE ON THE PLATEAU AND SUMS UP THE TOUGH CHARACTER OF MENDIP.

5 THE DIVERSE GEOLOGY THAT IS EASILY SEEN ranges from Devonian to Jurassic in a small area making it one of the best places in the country to appreciate the relationships between geology, landscape and natural history.

EBBOR GORGE WILL GET YOU UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL TO THE ROCKS.

6 THE CAVES for their wildlife, geological, archaeological importance. Avelines Hole is the oldest burial site in Britain and Goughs Cave in Cheddar Gorge is one of the most important Palaeolithic sites in Europe.

BURRINGTON COMBE IS THE SAFEST PLACE TO SEE CAVE ENTRANCES WITHOUT GETTING MUDDY. IF YOU WANT TO GO FURTHER CONTACT AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE COMPANY.

7 THE LIMESTONE AQUIFER feeding the reservoirs of Cheddar, Chew Valley and Blagdon lakes provides habitats of local and international importance for birds.

CHW VALLEY LAKE IS DESIGNATED A SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA FOR BIRD SPECIES.

8 THE CHEW VALLEY is the sheltered, farmed landscape with fields divided with hedges, that contrasts the windswept plateau.

9 DRYSTONE WALLS criss-cross the plateau dividing the farmland grazed by sheep, beef and dairy cattle. The walls are vital lifelines for wildlife like adders, they are perfect for basking on and make a safe way of moving from one place to another.

10 STEEP SOUTH-FACING SLOPES OF FLOWER-RICH LIMESTONE GRASSLANDS come to life in the summer.

CROOK PEAK AND WAVERING DOWN ARE SPECTACULAR PLACES WHERE YOU CAN MOVE ALONG THESE SLOPES AND LOOK OUT ACROSS SOMERSET.

11 ANCIENT WOODLAND combes on the north and south slopes offer rich habitats of national and international importance for a wide diversity of wildlife like dormouse and bats.

STEP INTO KINGS WOOD TO GET A TASTE OF THESE WOODED COMBES.

12 VIEWS TOWARDS the Mendip Hills from Exmoor, Quantocks, the Somerset Levels and Moors and Chew Valley.

THE VIEWS OUT including across the Severn Estuary to Wales and the Somerset Levels to Glastonbury Tor and the Somerset coast.



HOW THE GROUND BENEATH OUR FEET WAS FORMED

